

Box Office Mojo wikipedia

Box Office Mojo is an American website that tracks box-office revenue in a systematic, algorithmic way. The site was founded in 1998 by Brandon Gray, and was bought in 2008 by IMDb, which itself is owned by Amazon.

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It finally happened. Eleven years after Brandon Gray and I sold Box Office Mojo to Amazon/IMDb in 2008, they finally released a complete revamp of the site, updating the design and backend so that it appears to be fully integrated with the IMDb database.

Several features have been moved behind the IMDb Pro paywall, including some genre and franchise movie charts, while some features disappeared altogether including: weekly theater counts, calendar views of box office on movie pages, adjusting any domestic box office chart for ticket price inflation, among others.

The reaction on Twitter and the Hollywood press is resoundingly negative. Many want their old Mojo back. I do hope IMDb takes some of this feedback seriously, not because of the "design" but because of what it says about their editorial focus and understanding of box office.

It's actually amazing how much data did make into the new version (calendar grosses vs. by release date, seasonal and holiday grosses, etc.), and even some added useful information (such as noting holiday names on the chart index pages [e.g., President's Day Weekend]). This indicates that whatever is missing, was intentionally not prioritized, which sheds some light on their approach -- and leaves some hope that they now have a reliable platform with which to innovate new charts and content.

When I teamed with Brandon Gray and we formed Mojo as a company in 2002, I took on the task of putting all the box office data into a database (previously it had been updated in Microsoft's Front Page, believe it or not). Much of the code base that was running up until the just-released IMDb Pro refresh was written between 2002 and 2008 (IMDb didn't do many updates after the acquisition, other than remove features). That means some of that code was SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD, including an antiquated single-user back end system written in FileMaker Pro (version 5 or 6).

The site had become clunky, with missing features and abandoned content (such as screen counts on weekend charts). Anyone using the site regularly complained about a frequent message that the site was "being updated" and to "check back soon." We lived with it.

In short: a complete revamp of the backend technology was badly needed, and integrating it with the IMDb platform, at least on the backend, would save on double-entry of basic movie data. The lack of a mobile friendly site was a major usability problem too. On this front, the new redesign is a welcome improvement.

On Twitter, many are complaining that certain features are behind a paywall and only accessible through IMDb Pro. However, this is not the problem. Newer Mojo fans probably forget (or weren't old enough to even remember) that the previous version of Mojo also had a paywall, called "Premier Pass."

Many features were "hidden" behind this paywall, including an ad-free experience, site-wide inflation adjust functionality, sorting charts, additional daily/weekend charts (e.g., studio estimates vs. actuals), weekly (7-day) box office, calendar grosses, etc. Many charts only displayed partial data (e.g., top 50 or 100 movies for yearly box office), which required a Premier Pass to access the full site.

When IMDb removed user accounts (in 2009-2010?), it made many of these Premier Pass features free, while removed others that required using an account (such as customized weekend charts, vs. charts, etc.). It also abandoned showtimes data and redirected users to IMDb for that information, which broke the screen counts data on the weekend charts. (I suspect this was done to secure an old, outdated system, while they worked on a complete rewrite of the website.)

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